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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5981  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3843  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2357  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7049  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1020  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4422  
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INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 6786

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Lebanon, Syria/Spain,  
Syria/Canada, Resolution 1680, Olmert's US Visit (5/25)

**¶1.** Summary: Syrian papers commemorated the anniversary of the liberation of south Lebanon and featured a statement by former Lebanese Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss criticizing the Lebanese government's cancellation of the formal holiday, which had been approved earlier for celebrating the liberation and resistance. He stressed that the 25th of May is a national day symbolizing the great national and Pan-Arab achievement of liberating occupied Lebanese lands from the Israeli occupation. For its part, the Lebanese Democratic Party, headed by Talal Arslan, stressed that the Lebanese resistance is "a strategic balance and strength in the face of the Israeli enemy," adding that any dialogue about resistance should aim to reinforce it, not target it. The party warned against Western plans to internationalize the Lebanese issue, calling on all parties to behave wisely and adopt dialogue to solve all disputes. Papers cited a message of congratulation from the Golan prisoners to the Lebanese resistance on Liberation Day in Lebanon, saying, "we are a nation living in dignity, not fearing pressures and conspiracy against us." They stressed that their liberation from Israeli prisons is inevitable as long as there are men of great will. Papers also reported that Syria and Lebanon signed a memorandum of understanding to fight money laundering and terrorism financing within the framework of Syrian efforts to join the EGMONT GROUP [of Financial Intelligence Units.] Governor of the Central Bank of Syria, Dr. Adib Mayala, who also chairs the Commission to Fight Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing, signed the memorandum with Mohammed Al-Baasiri, Secretary of the Lebanese Special Investigation Commission. The memo is part of the Commission's quest to widen international cooperation to fight money laundering, and the persistent efforts of Syria to join the International EGMONT GROUP of financial intelligence entities. The EGMONT GROUP is an international network that works to collect information on suspicious activities from the financial industry, to analyze the data, and to make it available to national authorities and other intelligence units for use in combating terrorism and other financial crimes.

Papers also reported that Bernardino Leon, Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, underlined the important role of

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Syria in the Middle East, saying "Syria is a central country in the region, and it is difficult to ignore its role." "Syria is witnessing important and attractive developments on the social, tourist and economic levels; Spanish companies wish to contribute effectively to investments in Syria so as to boost relations between the countries," the Spanish Minister added, during a meeting with Buthaina Shaaban, Minister of Expatriates. Shaaban underlined the importance of Syrian-Spanish relations on all levels and expressed appreciation for Spain's positive role on Arab issues.

Papers reported that Mahmoud al-Abrash, Speaker of the People's Assembly, discussed with Brad Trust, Head of a Canadian economic parliamentary delegation, strengthening of parliamentary relations between the two countries. During the meeting, al-Abrash expressed Syria's readiness to enhance economic relations with all countries, and with Canada in particular, in way that will reflect positively on Syrian development. The Canadian delegation, for its part, expressed its country's desire to contribute to an economic role in the region, particularly in Syria, who enjoys good investment climate.

End of summary.

#### ¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Lebanon celebrates Liberation Day. President of Lebanon Lahoud: Disarming the national resistance is a conspiracy against Lebanon. Former Lebanese Premier al-Hoss: Liberation Day is an historical day. Prisoners of occupied Golan congratulate the Lebanese resistance on Liberation Day" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/25)

"A memorandum of understanding with Lebanon on combating money laundering and financing terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/25)

"Speaker of the People's Assembly al-Abrash discusses with a Canadian economic delegation boosting parliamentary and economic relations" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/25)  
"US President Bush supports Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's plan, and the Palestinian Authority rejects a unilateral settlement. Scores of Palestinians martyred and injured in an Israeli Incursion into Ramallah" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/25)

"Spain: Syria is a pivotal country that can't be ignored" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/25)

"FE-ARAB [Arab Federation for Latin America] Venezuela condemns pressures and threats against Syria" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/25)

"Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Maliki expects to control security in Iraq within 18 months. Washington acknowledges difficulties facing its forces in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/25)

"UN SecGen Annan reiterates the importance of solving crisis with Iran through negotiation. Iranian President Nejad: We will react to any aggression by a historic blow" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/25)

#### ¶3. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Resistance Is the Way to Freedom"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (5/25): "No military power can defeat a nation aspiring to freedom, adopting resistance as a strategic option, and rejecting surrender and bargaining....

"The unprecedented accomplishment of the Lebanese national resistance, with its limited resources but unyielding resolve, forced the strongest terrorist military power in the region to

retreat....

"These days, while the Lebanese people commemorate the anniversary of the May 2000 victory, when the Israeli Army ran away from the hell of south Lebanon, dragging behind it the agents who betrayed the homeland and stabbed it in the back, some Lebanese parties are trying to disavow the resistance, or perhaps take revenge against it. They throw all their weight behind the attempts to disarm the resistance under feeble pretexts, to expose Lebanon to a vicious enemy that cannot forget its miserable defeat in the south six years ago and that is still trying to take revenge against the Lebanese national resistance and its forces and leaders....

"However, these desperate attempts will not succeed, and the resistance in Lebanon and in every other place and time will remain the only way to freedom."

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#### "Flagrant Intervention in Lebanon's Domestic Affairs"

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Dr. Sa'id Musallam, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (5/25): "UN Security Council Resolution 1680 is a flagrant violation of international conventions and a blatant interference in the domestic affairs and sovereignty of UN member states....

"The Syrian position toward the resolution is based on the right of states to exercise their sovereignty and authority on their land and the fact that national laws and sovereignty have supremacy and cannot be touched, no matter what international resolutions may say....

"The United Nations is turning into a forum for American-Zionist tutelage over the world, particularly the Arab region and Islamic nations...."

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#### "What Is Hidden and What Is Announced on Olmert's Visit"

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Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/25): "We expect that during his visit to Washington Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will fail in his effort to gain American support for the two main points on the agenda of his visit: the unilateral withdrawal plan and the Iranian nuclear file....

"The United States, which is facing problems in Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, does not want to appear to be abandoning the Roadmap at a time when it needs the international community's support and perhaps the support of some of the countries in the region for its anti-Iran policy. Also, Washington does not want any Israeli appearance on the stage of the Iranian nuclear crisis, as this would embarrass the US Administration, which is portraying this crisis as a confrontation between Iran and the entire international community....

"But these ostensible differences between the two allies must not conceal the fact that they often work for the same objectives. The situation sometimes dictates that they use certain tactics and take particular factors into consideration until the right time comes for them to market their joint approach...."

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